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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON LEBANON

Editorial Commentary

-- "New birth at the hands of the Israeli army!"

Chief Editor Taher Odwan writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (07/23): "What is happening in Lebanon today and what happens and continues to happen in Iraq are not labor pains, because birth means life. It is rather ominous and an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. What new Middle East is Rice talking about other than this legendary destruction and devastation? Does the path towards the new Middle East only go through the removal of neighborhoods, the destruction of cities, and taking countries and peoples hundreds of years backward?! The Americans refuse to learn from their mistakes in Iraq. They are running forward by resurrecting life in slogans that were proven to be a failure and that have brought nothing but the absence of security, stability and the spread of a culture of warring and massacres. The Bush administration had the illusion that if it occupied Iraq, it will be able to control the entire Middle East and place in the service of American-Zionist interests to be torn and weakened. But this illusion fell through because of the Iraqi resistance and also because of the vacuum created by the occupation.

Today, the U.S. administration has the same illusions. It is dreaming about achieving, through the Israeli army what the American army failed to achieve in Iraq. And now start the ominous scenarios and the ideas of the 'princes of darkness' for a new Middle East, achieved by annihilating the Lebanese and destroying Lebanon. Yet, the mistake that this administration is making is much bigger than that committed in Iraq, because its tool, Israel and the Israeli army, is exactly what makes its Middle East projects so suspicious."

-- "Rice the 'midwife' is coming!"

Columnist Jawad Bashiti writes on the op-ed page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (07/23): "Today, the 'midwife', U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, arrives. After all, the 'new Middle East' is about to be born.... Rice the midwife comes with a group of solutions for the problems of the three captured Israeli soldiers and Shab'a farms that allow the Israeli 'cesarean' operation to deliver the 'new Middle East'. According to Rice, the issue of the prisoner Gilad Shalit must be resolved in isolation of the issue of the other two Israeli soldiers captured by Hizbollah. As for the problem of Shab'a farms, it can be solved by transferring control over it to an international entity, thus nullifying the justification for the 'resistance' in Lebanon, and thus making it possible to resolve the biggest problem, namely

Hizbollah, by implementing what has not been implemented of the Security Resolution 1559."

-- "Bush's foolishness embarrasses his Arab allies and threatens the security and stability of the region"

Columnist Rana Sabbagh writes on the op-ed page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (07/23): "God help America's friends in the Arab world who are losing face, credibility and popularity day in and day out ever since George Bush was elected President of the United States six years ago.... These friend governments are now stuck in the corner and are in distress. They suffer from campaigns that question their patriotism, and even more, are sworn against for their failure to express people's anger at America's policies and those of its main ally, Israel, and at the inability of the Arab regimes to put an end to the humiliation and degradation that is affecting the entire Arab world.... Bush and Rice forget that the internal tension, the military adventures, and the half political solutions that the Middle East is suffering from are the outcome of America's new policies that ally with Israel and appease Iran; policies that are based on deficient and wrong information and strategic analyses, lacking understanding of the reality of Arab societies, not listening to the advice and warnings of allies, and not wanting to start a direct dialogue with countries and parties that are involved in everything that is going on, starting with Iran and Syria and ending with Hizbollah and Hamas. Bush seems to not understand yet that political Islam and armed resistance groups have now become the most growing and most popular political and social sector of political life in all the countries of the region, and that most of this is the result of the irresponsible policies of his administration in the Middle East. Bush must understand that the aspired stability will not happen in the Middle East unless the Arab Israeli conflict, which has existed since 1948, is resolved on the basis of international legitimacy,

justice, equality and righteousness. Hizbollah, Hamas, Al-Qaeda, and other will otherwise continue to flourish and expand at the expense of realism and logic."

-- "Condi is coming to the region, so how can we receive her in a civilized way?"

Columnist Bater Wardam writes on the inside page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/23): "Condi is not going to listen to the voice of reason. In fact, she is not coming to the region to listen but rather to impose her convictions on the Arab world and give Israel more time to achieve a military and political victory that will not be achieved; more time that will only yield more Lebanese martyrs and more destruction of the infra-structure.... Condi comes to the region while we read in the New York Times that the American army is currently sending smart bombs to the Israeli army to be used in the aggression against Lebanon. This means that the United States and Mrs. Condi are active participants in the war on Lebanon and in killing the Lebanese people. What do we do to welcome Condi in a civilized manner that proves that we are a people of dignity and honor and not necessarily terrorists? Could there be clear Jordanian and Arab reactions to the American bias without the use of violence, burning flags and threats? I am referring here to the Jordanian civil society and not the government, just to be clear. I am talking about a group of ideals that could be implemented within the context of the peaceful struggle.... The Parliament can begin a move against the American Senate that had voted in favor of supporting Israel two days ago.... The associations and union can do a lot. The Engineers Association for instance can boycott any Jordanian engineering cooperation with American engineering companies, and the same can be done by the other associations. The Lawyers Association can ease up its focus on supporting Saddam Hussein and move on to building international lawsuits against the American policies in international arenas.... The media can do a great deal. The Press Association must boycott any coordination with the American Embassy even if that includes 'free of charge training courses'. This means boycotting the new project that USAID is implementing to develop the Jordanian media. It also includes rejecting all invitations to field visits to the United States on which dozens of Jordanian journalists have gone before. The national and pan-Arab stance deserves the sacrifice. It is also possible to boycott all press conferences for American officials in Jordan, even it is Condi

herself.... The civil society organizations play an important role because they are the voice of the society ... and they all have the ability to rally supporters. These organizations must adopt a clear stance about boycotting the activities of USAID and the American Embassy and refuse to deal with any of the USAID-supported projects.

This would in reality represent a very important stand because it proves the ability of these organizations to sacrifice and to be a voice of the society instead of just institutions looking for funding from any source.... All of us in Jordan can, without waiting for the government, do undertake some steps that may on their own be small but together they would be huge; peaceful and civilized steps that will achieve a great deal of dignity and self-respect for us."

-- "Rice in the region; which way will she go?"

Columnist Oraib Rantawi writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/23): "I believe there are two ways for Rice to deal with the crisis. The first will be an extension to the U.S. arrogant and hardline approach that has characterized the American conduct in the region and led to the destruction of Iraq. The second is the approach of diplomacy and politics that could establish an exit out of the dangerous standoff that faces Lebanon and the entire region. The arrogance approach is based on the option of force and on the logic of 'squashing' Hizbollah, which is in itself an approach already in trouble, because, even it succeeds in pushing Hizbollah 10-20 kilometers north, it will only establish a new era of internal Lebanese conflict. After all, who will disarm Hizbollah, and more importantly, who will take away Hizbollah's Shiite majority? Policy and diplomacy on the other hand propose a comprehensive handling of all aspects of the Lebanese crisis. Washington today has an appropriate point of entry to put close the issue of the Lebanese prisoners in return for the two captured soldiers. It also has the opportunity to end the issue of Shab'a farms and remove the last justification for Syria's presence in Lebanon.... If this political option is supplemented by a 'deal' on the Palestinian track, then Rice will have succeeded in putting out burning fires in the region, even after the destruction of Gaza, Nablus, Beirut and Ba'albek. Otherwise, Washington will have walked in Bremer's shoes in Iraq, and destruction will prevail. The administration will have repeated the failures and sins committed in Iraq, and the entire region, not just Iraq and Lebanon, will have entered the age of destructive chaos and conflicts that will burn everything including the interests of Washington and Israel."

-- "Rice, these are the roots of the problem"

Columnist Yaser Abu Hilaleh writes on the op-ed page of centrist, independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad (07/23): "It is ironic what U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said about resolving the roots

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of the problem in parallel to building the 'new Middle East', because her remarks came at a time that does not tolerate such crude and arrogant delivery of teachings and instructions.... Condoleezza Rice must realize that the roots of the problem are in Tel Aviv and not in Beirut or Damascus or Tehran, and there is no point of trying to convince the people of the Arab and Muslim world of other than that.... How many Osama Bin Ladens will be born from these scenes of destruction! In the search for the roots of the problem, do you remember, Condi, September 16? It is the day when militias, in collusion with Sharon, committed the massacres of Sabra and Shatila, killing the same number of people as those killed in the 9/11 attacks. But these people are bugs and mere statistics while your victims are human beings and not just numbers. These days, the victims are the terrorists and the criminals are the peace heroes. The roots of the problem go beyond that. Abdel Nasser stood against you and the Arab people supported him, not because they are against market economy and university credit hours system. They stood by him because you were with Israel. The people supported Khomeini, putting aside all national and sectarian differences with Iran, because he stood against you and you stood by Israel.... People stood with Saddam because he stood against Israel and against you. And today, they will stand with Lahhoud, with Bashar Assad, with Khamin'i and before that with Hassan Nasrallah and Khaled Mish'al.... The root of the problem is Palestine.... Excuse me Condi but you know nothing about the roots of the problem."

-- "A new Middle East or new Nazism?"

Columnist Mahmoud Rimawi writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (07/23): "Let us note the features of the new Middle East as promised by [the U.S.] Secretary. First is the expansion of the American and Israeli attack against countries and armies to include societies and people.... Second is the resurrection of a new Nazism that undertakes extermination and extinction campaigns on pretexts of religion and race.... Third, Washington stands fiercely against the establishment of peace in the Middle East ... and the Republican administration will use the rest of its term in office to perform the role of the secretariat for the Olmert government and will search for all pretexts to deprive the people of this region of freedom, peace, dignity and security.... This is the new Middle East that Condoleezza Rice was selected to pronounce."

-- "Clearly defining root cause"

Centrist, elite English daily Jordan Times (07/23) editorializes: "An immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hizbollah holds out only 'false promise,' US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said yesterday. Accordingly, she said, there can be no return to what she called the 'status quo.' Perhaps Rice would like to try and explain why that is so to the relatives of the nearly 350 Lebanese civilians killed in the brutal Israeli onslaught so far.... Perhaps, too, Rice would like to explain herself to the relatives of the nearly 20 Israeli civilians who have been killed in the Hizbollah reaction. The fact is Washington has given a green light to Israel to continue a military onslaught that can be described in no other terms but bloodthirsty, disproportionate and outrageous. Given the fact that the US could have reined in Israel, and could have done so almost immediately, the US administration must bear some of the responsibility for the tragic events that have transpired. If the US indeed holds all human life to be valuable, surely there can be no higher immediate priority than to immediately seek an end to the fighting that has killed so many innocent people.... A ceasefire is the primary and immediate humanitarian goal and should be pursued for humanitarian reasons. Nothing more, nothing less. On the other hand, Rice does make a good point when she says that 'root causes' need to be addressed. Unfortunately, in her reading, those root causes begin with Hizbollah and end in Tehran via Damascus, neatly bypassing Israel. Once again, the US is willfully omitting a crucial factor. Israel is the only country in the Middle East (apart from the US, of course) that is belligerently and illegally occupying territory belonging to others.... If Rice wants to talk about root causes, then perhaps she should include a clear and unyielding formula for how the world can once and for all put an end to the nearly 40-year occupation of Arab land by Israel. Then, and only then, can Israel and the US talk about self-defense. Before those occupations end, Israel will always be the aggressor."

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